DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 972 RC 014 376

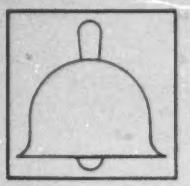
AUTHOR Seifert, Edward H.; Kurtz, William H.
TITLE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Smaller Schools. A Handbook for Superintendents and School Boards.
INSTITUTION Southwest Texas State Univ., San Marcos.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM Small Schools Resource Center, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666 ($2.00).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adjustment (to Environment); *Community Involvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Employment Interviews; *Labor Turnover; School Community Relationship; School Involvement; *Small Schools; Social Support Groups; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Orientation; Teacher Qualifications; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Selection; Teacher Shortage; Teaching Conditions

ABSTRACT

Working together, communities and small school districts can combat teacher shortages affected by negative attitudes towards teaching, working conditions, and general economic conditions by providing sufficient resources for successful teacher recruitment and retention programs. Specific strategies for recruitment, interviewing, induction, and retention are essential program elements. Effective recruitment strategy depends on the recruiter's ability to locate teachers whose characteristics fit the small school's needs. Successful strategies also include such proven components as competitive salaries and fringe benefits, subsidized advanced education in return for teaching commitments, paid interview trips and moving expenses, guaranteed summer employment, and the inclusion of community information in recruitment materials. Interviewing strategies require skilled interviewers who listen well, like the community, and can match the teacher's skills and interests to the job and community. Effective induction involves both long- and short-term orientation activities based on goals reflecting new employee needs and district philosophy. Such goals include good communication, community involvement, help in adjusting to the work environment, and a year-long orientation to the school and community. Retention strategies require a community commitment to higher salaries; social inclusion of teachers; opportunities for long range growth, prestige, and recreation; and motivators such as paid professional dues. (SB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****



Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Smaller Schools

June 1983

ED234972

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy

OCT 1983
RECEIVED
ERIC/CRESS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Edward H. Seifert

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RC014376

A Handbook for Superintendents and School Boards

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Smaller Schools

Edward H. Seifert
William H. Kurtz

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Recruitment Strategies	3
Interviewing Strategies	7
Induction Strategies	9
Retention Strategies	11

COPYRIGHT © EDWARD H. SEIFERT AND WILLIAM H. KURTZ
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written consent of the authors.

Printed as a Project of the Small Schools Resource Center, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas 78666.

Introduction

The teacher shortage is real. Despite reports from several sources which indicate that the decline in student population will produce a significant surplus of teachers, the latest report from the National Education Association indicates that 37 states reported a critical shortage in at least one region and in at least one curricular area. There are other signs of the broad based nature of this shortage:

> In 1972, 34% of all Bachelor Degree recipients were prepared to teach. By 1982 this number was 18% and it continues to decline.
>
> The 1982 supply and demand report of the Association for School, College and University Staffing indicated that 18 teaching fields had a shortage and that only two (Art & Physical Education) had considerable surpluses. Eleven others showed some surplus.
>
> The State of Georgia has hired a recruiter to find out-of-state teachers to "reduce the number of teacher vacancies".
>
> The increase in school age population will become significant in 1984 and could approach the peak numbers of the recent "baby boom". In the monograph "A Profound Transportation" produced by the American Association of School Administrators, this phenomena is shown to affect the educational enterprise through the year 2000.

Several influences that will affect the intensity of the shortage are attitudes about teaching, working conditions, and economic conditions.

A study of teachers conducted at Sam Houston State University indicates that one out of three teachers is seriously planning to leave the profession. Those who actually left teaching had an average salary of $14,112 after eleven years of experience. This amount compares to entry level salaries that average $20,000 per year in competitive markets. Because of the size of this disparity, teachers have developed a strong negative attitude towards their economic status. As prospective teachers learn of these attitudes they eliminate themselves from teacher preparation programs. Consequently, fifty per cent fewer students are entering preparation programs than in 1971.

As a result of information gathered in studies at the University of Michigan, Georgia Southern University, and Southwest Texas State University, it appears that working conditions are a great influence on those leaving the profession. Of those who left after one year, only one fourth listed money as the primary reason. Basic reasons cited were lack of support from administrators, other teachers, and the community and problems encountered in sponsoring extra class activities not related to instruction. Money became more important as years of experience increased; however, the feeling of no support permeated all replies. Teachers felt completely abandoned by those whom they felt could and/or should be helping them. Isolation, lack of communication, lack of understanding and lack of guidance were consistantly expressed as negative perceptions of their work. Curiously, when administrators of these teachers were contacted, they felt they had good orientation programs, communicated well with the staff and in general seemed unaware of the problem. This phenomenon indicated a need for examining existing strategies to see if they are effective. The development of a program to protect against this communication breech is a major part of the retention strategy.

The lack of a chance for advancement within the teaching ranks is also a significant negative influence for teachers. It is indeed rare to find a creative promotion system for teachers without their having to leave the classroom. Alternatives other than administration or counseling are being sought by an increasing number of teachers.

Changing economic conditions are also causing concern. We may be developing an aparthied society based on financial ability to move rather than racial superiority. In times when only a portion of the society can afford to move, the frustration level of those left behind can only increase. It radically changes the only promotion pattern now available to teachers-that of moving from a smaller or less prestigious district to a larger or more prestigious district. In this depressed economy it also makes it more difficult for districts to financially support their teachers. The combination of these data create an effect that is demoralizing for teachers. The stimuli are so strong that leaving the profession seems to be the only viable alternative.

When these data are viewed collectively, they indicate clearly that an evaluation of present strategies for recruiting, orientation and retention of employees should take place. Without new, effective efforts, quality will significantly decline. The next section of this monograph presents some workable strategies gleaned from districts that are now using them. All will not work for each district but they should provide a base for improving any district.

Recruitment Strategies

Developing more refined recruitment strategies is critical to solving the problems community schools are now facing as they compete for quality personnel. Administrators in these community schools must design and implement a plan for teacher recruitment that specifically reflects the needs and uniquenesses of the local district. Effective recruitment designs generally focus on the following topics:

- Friendliness of small communities
- Potential for status available in the prospective community
- Flexible programming to work in one's own interest area
- Small enrollments facilitating individual attention to students
- District focus of quality education programs
- Administrative support for professional growth and development
- Peer support environments
- Professional growth opportunities
- Any special self-development opportunities available such as proximities to professional libraries or extended university programs

Developing The Recruiting Strategy

The key to effective teacher recruitment is encompassed in the ability of the recruiter to locate teachers who possess characteristics which are congruent with the needs of the school. These "ideal characteristics" for many smaller schools usually include, but are not limited to, teachers who are

- Certified and able to teach in more than one subject matter area or grade level
- Prepared to supervise several extracurricular activities
- Able to teach a wide range of abilities in a single classroom
- Able to adjust to the uniqueness of the community in terms of social opportunities, life styles, shopping needs, and continuous scrutiny

As the recruitment stategies are developed, each of these concepts must be expanded so as to represent specifically the true needs and true characteristics of the community. The closer these characteristics reflect the reality of working and living in a district the greater the probability of securing and retaining quality teachers.

Strategies now being used by school districts are presented as practical suggestions for items to be included in the plan for recruiting.

- The easiest and most efficient strategy for teacher recruitment is based on a competitive salary and extra duty pay schedule. The community is the key to this suggestion and they will determine the part that money will play in the recruiting effort. Patrons must make an overt decision to pay what is necessary for attracting quality teachers.

- A very broad fringe benefit package may be more attractive to prospective teachers than salary. These benefits may include such items as:
  - Paid Insurance Premium (i.e. medical, hospital, dental, life, and salary protector)
  - Personal Leave
  - Sick Leave
  - Professional Leave
  - Credit Unions (i.e. Board of Education matches ½ of teacher contribution)
  - Sick Leave Bank (some days of leave are in a "bank" to be used by any employee who has needs in excess of available days. These are repaid after they are used.)

- The district can subsidize the cost of teacher retraining to fit the needs of the school district, which offers the prospective teacher a method to obtain an additional area of certification.

- The district may offer to pay the costs of a teacher earning a master's degree, and in turn, the teacher makes a commitment to teach in the district for three years after receiving the degree.

- The district may identify outstanding junior level education majors in the various colleges and universities, select those that meet the district's needs, and offer financial assistance in the form of scholarships. This agreement would be contingent upon the student's willingness to sign a letter of commitment to teach in the school district for specific periods of time.

- Administrators could telephone a School of Education and request names of the highest ranking graduates in the field in which personnel were needed. School administrators would then call the recommended graduates, explaining their penchant for quality and why they were interested in that particular graduate. Paid trips to the district for these individuals could be arranged.

- The district may find it helpful to incorporate local community groups and potential support systems into packaged recruitment materials. This strategy uses community groups as the featured organization on brochures or letterhead stationary so that the potential recruit has a feeling of belonging to the larger community.

- Some districts have involved local businesses, welcome wagons, civic clubs and other groups in their actual recruiting progresses and interviews. The friendliness exhibited by some of these groups has frequently facilitated hiring processes.

- The district may identify and actively recruit outstanding teachers in large districts and prospective teachers that were raised and educated in smaller schools by reminding these individuals of the many benefits they received while growing up in a small town atmosphere. These benefits may include such items as:

  —A slower pace of living
  —Smaller class size with an opportunity to get to know each student as an individual
  —Raising children in a more controlled environment
  —Opportunities for children to be invoied in several extracurricular activities.

- Paying interview expenses of applicant.

- Assist with securing moving loans or paying part of the cost of relocating.

- Arranging for interest-free loans before arrival of first paycheck.

- The district may emphasize teacher autonomy and direct access to the administration. The teacher may be the only person working in a specific subject matter area or grade level, thus having greater control over the learning outcomes (curriculum) and the teaching methodology (instruction). The chance to directly influence administrative decisions is quite appealing to many teachers.

- The school district could provide less expensive housing for teachers. This recruiting idea could be accomplished in several ways:

  The district would implement a vocational education program in the building trades. The students would learn a

saleable skill (carpentry) and at the same time develop a rental property for teachers.

The district could encourage members of the community to provide housing. The local banker can have his/her bank provide less expensive housing in the form of duplexes, houses, or mobile homes. This idea incorporates the community as a part of the recruitment plan.

- The school district could encourage the business community to help by providing summer employment for teachers. If the school recruiter is reasonably able to assure the candidate of summer employment, he/she is more likely to accept the position. The business sector in the community should welcome the opportunity to hire quality individuals. Using this idea, both the community and the school district receive benefits.

- In order to attract effective teachers, it may be necessary to provide employment opportunities for the teacher's spouse, which can be accomplished through a joint effort of the community and the school district. Administrators should encourage local employment sources to let the school district recruiter know when they have job vacancies. The school district may fill its needs for support personnel through the pool of unemployed spouses.

The development of a quality small school depends directly upon the quality of teachers employed. The administrator and board of education in smaller school districts are primarily responsible for teacher employment. However, the community can provide additional recruitment incentives and should accept some responsibility for a quality educational program. Recruitment must become a joint venture between the community and the school district, and the development of a recruiting plan that involves both should be very successful.

Interviewing Strategies

Interviewing prospective applicants is a skill that must be fully developed if quality personnel are to be hired. The plan for interviewing includes selecting the proper person as well as the proper strategies.

A sincerely interested interviewer is an asset that cannot be overemphasized. This type of person is skilled in active listening techniques and has basic positive feelings for the community for which he is recruiting personnel. Recruits often respond more to individuals and their styles and skills than to their positions or the content they represent.

Interviewing strategies involve selling the district and screening applicants. Recruits will frequently select jobs after considering whom they might feel comfortable working with and receive reinforcement from. Interviewers should provide descriptions of potential informal and formal peer support groups. This is typically a much stronger attraction than verbage concerning facilities and equipment.

In screening applicants, the interviewer will want to look carefully at the degree to which recruits:

- Would be accepting of the rural culture
- Have behaviors appropriate for the environment in which they will be living
- Have generic skills
- Have interest consistent with local lifestyles
- Have interest in gaining knowledge of the local community, its political system, and history
- Have the ability to develop local and long distance support systems

Administrators should employ informal checklists when interviewing persons external to the community. It is important that the same data are gathered about each applicant so that valid comparisons can be made. The following questions may be of value in developing the interviewing strategies:

1. Will the interviewee's personal traits and goals be compatible with those in the area?

2. Will the community provide the necessary social opportunities for this applicant?

3. Will the position provide a challenge for the applicant?

4. Does the applicant have hobbies or other avocational interests which initiate self-entertainment and self-sufficiency?

5. Is the applicant genuinely interested in learning about the unique aspects of this particular community?

6. Is the applicant flexible enough to cross interdisciplinary lines as required in an area of scarce specialized resources?

7. Will the applicant be able to cooperate with people with different viewpoints?

Induction Strategies

An effective induction system contains short term orientation activities and long term personnel support programs. These programs should be based on a specific set of goals that reflect the needs of new employees and are consistent with the philosophy of the school district. It should be recognized that the full induction process will take about three years. The following goals are basic to a sound induction plan:

1. Establish communication processes within the school and the district that will make teachers feel welcome and secure.
2. Help teachers become an integral part of the community.
3. See that all employees receive help in adjusting to their work environments.
4. Provide a vehicle for employees to integrate through an agressive orientation program.
6. Provide a continuous (year long) orientation program that reinforces these goals throughout the year.

Pre-school/Beginning of the Year Activities

a) Develop an understanding of the community, especially, the social, cutural, ethnic and religious make-up.
b) Make visits to institutions such as libraries, museums, recreational facilities, major commercial facilities and other places of interest.
c) Plan an open exchange about community standards, customs and other uniquenesses.
d) Pair beginning teachers with master teachers based on subject taught and/or physical nearness of the teachers. This action requires significant preplanning and a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of each teacher. Its major benefit is to provide a continuous communication link. Master teachers who are a part of the buddy system should meet with administrators regularly to exchange experiences and identify general problems that need to be dealt with.
e) Plan a series of sessions to communicate the school's operating philosophy and uniqueness to new staff members.

Continuous Orientation Activities

A. Plan special inservices to be held throughout the year dealing with topics specifically directed toward beginning teachers. These activities are planned to dove tail with the preschool orientation activities.

B. Appoint someone to be responsible for helping the beginning teacher furnish and set up her room. There is strong belief that only through this kind of scheduled help can preparing the room be accomplished in a desirable manner. This same person should be a resource for making changes throughout the year.

C. New teachers are supervised so as to accomplish two goals. Regular (weekly at least) contacts by administrators and supervisors are used to open communication lines and to identify problems as soon as possible. In addition the barriers to communication between teachers and principles are consciously lowered so teachers will more readily share their true feelings. Through these types of exchanges the expectations of the school can be more clearly delineated.

D. Formal evaluation of the beginning teacher orientation program is carried on regularly. This process should provide clues to effectiveness of the program and provide suggestions for improvement. Both an oral discussion and written evaluations should be used.

E. Schedule a session in January for teachers and administrators who are in their first two years in the school. Topics should include any changes since school started, plans for the remainder of the year and a reemphasis of goals. Time should be spent giving feedback about how the staff is doing and for allowing the staff to discuss their problems.

F. Plan a year long series of social activities that allow the staff to get to know each other and interest with each other on a non school basis.

Retention Strategies

A major problem in smaller schools is maintaining the effective teacher in the school system. In order to accomplish this goal school districts need to develop a retention plan. The following ideas are practical suggestions for maintaining effective teachers in the smaller schools:

- The most obvious suggestion is increased salaries for teachers who choose to remain with the school district. Smaller schools must have a commitment from the community for a quality school system if this suggestion is to be implemented. Administrators in smaller schools need to share the problems of recruitment and maintaining of effective teachers with the community. If this can be accomplished, quite possibly the community will support increased local funding for teacher salaries and extra duty pay.

- The community school administrator needs to develop a close working relationship with churches, civic organizations, and other community support systems in order to encourage these groups to include teachers in their membership. In some instances community groups in smaller school districts are closed to outsiders (i.e., teachers). If teachers feel they are part of the community, then they are more likely to want to continue their employment.

- Community schools can strive to provide or encourage the community to provide recreational opportunities for teachers, which may take the form of transportation to area athletic events, summer softball leagues, fishing, and boating trips, arranging transportation for group travel, for ski trips, sightseeing tours, or possible trips overseas. Members of the community would be welcome to participate in these activities.

- The community school, in conjunction with landowners and lending agencies, could make the purchase of property available to teachers who choose to buy land. If teachers have some ownership in the area, they are more likely to become a permanent citizen of the area.

Long Range Growth Activities

Placing effective teachers in leadership positions has several advantages. Leadership positions contribute to professional growth as well as personal growth. Teachers see the rewards of more autonomy, more freedom, and growth of their knowledge as being as important as increased pay. The prestige of position usually translates to community prestige, thereby doubling the effect. Some strategies that districts are now using include the following:

- Initiating intra- or inter-district temporary faculty exchange programs
- Establishing inservice incentive systems including release time, college credit, and certificate renewal
- Providing special challenges or assignments, particularly when affiliated with pre- or in-service programs
- Establishment merit increases or other approaches to recognize extraordinary performance
- Initiating stress reduction activities ranging from desensitization to "venting," social functions, and physiological stress reduction exercises; and establishing local support systems for continuous stress reduction.

Motivational Strategies

The following "creative" retention strategies may serve as motivators for teachers and administrators as they consider their professional future:

— Paying professional organization dues
— Locating adequate housing
— Arranging social functions
— Sending indigenous persons to college and pay tuition
— Creating higher than usual salary supplements
— Creating intellectual stimulation
— Making professional literature available

The smaller school district, in concert with the community, can influence the educational quality by actively seeking and retaining effective teachers. Basic to this process is a commitment from the school and the community to provide sufficient resources, especially time and money, to successfully carry out the program. Lack of the commitment usually dooms the project. Once the commitment is made, the venture is limited only by the creativity of the district and its patrons. This monograph should provide the seeds to allow creative imagination to grow and prosper, culminating in significant improvement in the teaching and learning process of the district's schools.

Edward H. Seiffert is an Assistant professor of Education at Southwest Texas State. He has been a superintendent of schools and high school principal in the public schools, covering a period of fifteen years. Seiffert has authored more than 40 journal articles and is Co-editor of **Studies of Administrative Theory.**

William H. Kurtz is Associate Professor and Director of the Small Schools Resource Center at Southwest Texas State University. Dr. Kurtz taught chemistry and math in the public schools and has had 18 years of administrative experience in public school and university administration. He is Managing Editor of **The Small School Forum,** a journal dedicated to the smaller school, and the recipient of an award "For distinguished service to the students of the Community (Small) schools of Texas" from the Texas Association of Community Schools.

OCT 1983
RECEIVED
ERIC/CRESS

Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78666

SWT is an affirmative action, equal opportunity educational institution.